Ch.1 Taking the ‘ism’ out of cosmopolitanism: the equivocations of ‘new cosmopolitanism’

The physical dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 offers a compelling image of the breaking down of boundaries maintained by force and of the re-opening of suppressed forms of human contact. This event appropriately marked the emergence of a new intellectual and political movement that is itself international and places human rights, international law, global governance and peaceful relations between states at centre of its vision of the world. When we speak today of the ‘new cosmopolitanism’ it is this movement that we have in mind.

Within the social sciences cosmopolitanism has evolved since 1989 into a vibrant, inter-disciplinary movement with its own distinctive research agenda (for edited collections see for example Archibugi et al. 1998; Archibugi 2004; Beck and Szaider 2006; Boon and Fine 2007; Breckenridge and Pollock 2002; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Held and McGrew 2002; Vertovec and Cohen 2003). The contours of this movement are not always well-defined and it is traversed internally by all kinds of fault lines; and yet the new cosmopolitanism is an identifiable current gravitating around a number of shared commitments. These include a) the overcoming of national presuppositions and prejudices within the social scientific disciplines themselves and the reconstruction in this light of the core concepts we employ; b) the recognition that humanity has entered an era of mutual inter-dependence on a world scale and the conviction that this worldly existence is not adequately understood within the terms of conventional social science; and c) the development of normative and frankly prescriptive theories of world citizenship, global justice and cosmopolitan democracy.

The dividing lines between these differentiated conceptual, societal and normative
concerns are by no means always clear and it is possible to accept one without the other. All the social scientific disciplines have their own particular story to tell, though one of the strengths of the new cosmopolitanism from the start has been that it is an inter-disciplinary project and that all its intra-disciplinary stories are the products of considerable exchange across the disciplines.

**The new cosmopolitanism within the social sciences**

In the field of International Law cosmopolitanism displays a logic that extends the scope of the discipline and to some extent transcends its origins. International law is conventionally conceived as a form of law which recognises the individual nation state as its unit of analysis and advances national self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states as its guiding principles. It imagined a world of sovereign freedom constrained by few international rules to constrain the behaviour of governments toward other states and toward their own citizens and subjects. Cosmopolitanism seeks to extend the reach of International Law beyond issues of state sovereignty. It concerns itself with the rights and responsibilities of world citizens. One of the key problems it addresses is that some of the worst violators of human rights can be states or state-like formations. Whilst international law has traditionally developed according to the principle that every state is sovereign within its own territory, cosmopolitanism endorses legal limitations on how rulers may behave toward the ruled; and whilst international law leaves it to states to protect the rights of individuals, cosmopolitanism looks also to the formation of international legal bodies above the level of nation states to perform this function. To be sure, there is a substantial grey area between state-centred and cosmopolitan conceptions of international law but the core analytical distinction is between the conventional form
of international law that recognises only states as legal subjects and limits the role of international bodies to that of protecting the sovereign rights of states, and the cosmopolitan form of international law that extends its reach to the rights of individuals and freedoms of civil society associations on the one hand and to the legal authority of international bodies on the other (Archibugi 1995a; Douglas 2001; Eleftheriadis 2003; Falk 1998 and 1999; Hirsh 2003; Robertson 2006; Sands 2003 and 2006).

In the field of International Relations cosmopolitanism also contains a logic that extends the scope and transcends the origins of the discipline. The ‘realist’ mainstream of International Relations holds that the state is the ultimate source of authority and by implication that there is no legal or moral authority beyond the plurality of sovereign states. In mainstream International Relations the idea of an international system composed of independent and sovereign states, called ‘Westphalian’ after its origins in the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, provides its normal point of departure. In realist International Relations this ‘anarchic’ system of sovereign states is regarded as a natural and immutable order, a given for all analytical purposes, or in more historically-informed accounts as a rational outcome of modernisation processes finally achieved at the end of history. The new cosmopolitanism criticises realism for its readiness to rationalise a system of sovereign states that is in fact historically specific and normatively conditional. It emphasises that the sovereignty of the state is itself a product of history rather than a permanent feature of the human condition and that its origins are to be explained rather than its ontological status assumed. It entertains the thought, excluded by realism, that the Westphalian system of sovereign states is in fact being surpassed. It breaks down the categorical distinction it sees in realism between the domestic field in
which individuals freely submit to the state as to their own rational will and the
international field taken to be devoid of all ethical values. It rejects the temporal
matrix which declares that inside the state progress can be accomplished over time but
that outside there can only be an eternal repetition of power and interest. And it
repudiates the intellectual rationalisation of a political order based on a lack of moral
and legal inhibition as to how states relate to one another and especially as to how
they relate to their own citizens and subjects. Its basic intuition is that many of the
assumptions of the Westphalian model are still operative in international relations
today but that the conditions for the reconstruction of international relations along
cosmopolitan lines are now ripe (Bartelson 2001; Brown 2006; Donnelly 1995; Doyle

In the field of Political Philosophy the new cosmopolitanism is usually based on the
revival of ideas of universal history, perpetual peace and cosmopolitan justice
developed in the eighteenth century and formalised by Kant around the time of the
French Revolution. The core contention is that the cosmopolitan ideals of
enlightenment thought are once again pertinent to our own times. The new
cosmopolitanism sets itself the task of ironing out inconsistencies in Kant’s way of
thinking, radicalising it where its break from the old order of sovereign states was
incomplete, freeing it from the old metaphysical baggage, elaborating linkages
between peace and social justice which Kant neglected, and applying it to a radically
transformed social context. The basic agenda of cosmopolitan political philosophy is
to ‘think with Kant against Kant’ in reconstructing the cosmopolitan ideal for our own
times. A crucial aspect of this programme is to re-assess the normative value of
nationalism. While advocates of the new cosmopolitanism are prepared to
acknowledge that nationalism may have had value in the past, not least in the pursuit
of anti-colonial struggles or in the building of modern welfare states, they renounce the idea that solidarity ties must be conceptually linked to the nation-state and pronounce the death of nationalism as a normative principle of social integration. The credo of the new cosmopolitanism is that the universalistic character of the idea of right, once swamped by the self-assertion of one nation against another, is best suited to the identity of world citizens and not to that of citizens of one state against another (Apel 1997; Archibugi 1995a; Buchanan 2000; Cavallar 1999; Fine 2001 and 2003a; Habermas 1997 and 2001; Hoffe 2006; Kant 1991; Kuper 2000; Lara and Fine 2007; Hoffe 2006; McCarthy 1997; Nussbaum 1997; Pogge 2001; O’Neill 2000; Rawls 1999; Smith and Fine 2004).

My final example is in the field of Sociology and Social Theory. Here the rise of cosmopolitan thinking is closely aligned with attempts to dissociate the core concepts of social theory, especially that of ‘society’ itself, from the presuppositions of the nation state. It is argued that a strong notion of national society has prevailed within the sociological tradition as a result both of the discipline’s own nationalistic consciousness and of the actual solidity and expansion of national societies during the time of Sociology’s development. The new cosmopolitanism maintains that the concept of ‘society’ was shaped at birth by a coincidence between the rise of sociology as a discipline and the formation of nation-states as the modern form of political community, and emphasises the historicity of this conceptual framework and its inappropriateness for understanding social life in an age of globalisation. Its conviction is that the old national framework of sociological analysis is no longer capable of dealing with the major social transformations currently taking place under the register of globalisation: the proliferation of connections between societies, the growth of power structures outside national frameworks of accountability; the
proliferation of global risks (of an ecological, political, economic, epidemic, criminal and terrorist character) that have no respect for national boundaries; the increasing movement of people across national frontiers and the resulting heterogeneity of populations in most modern societies; growing numbers of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers; and the increasing importance of international political and regulatory bodies. The new cosmopolitanism holds that such changes in social life indicate the need for a corresponding change in social theory – one which takes the world and not the nation state as its primary unit of analysis. Its project is to free social theory from a world that no longer exists and overcome those categories of understanding and standards of judgement which depend on a moribund national framework (Albrow 1996; Beck 2006; Castells 2000; Delanty 2000; Urry 2000).

This brief outline of the parameters of the new cosmopolitanism is anything but exhaustive; it is intended only to illustrate the parameters of the new cosmopolitanism within the social sciences and how the new cosmopolitanism presents itself in this context. At the core of the cosmopolitan project is the notion that social science has in the past made its peace with the nation state and the conviction that this reconciliation with reality must now be overcome. The new cosmopolitanism is an endeavour to denature and centre the nation state – to loosen the ties that bind the nation state to theories of democracy in political theory, theories of society in sociology, theories of internationalism in international relations, theories of sovereignty in international law and theories of justice in political philosophy. We could add theories of culture in Cultural Studies and theories of space in Human Geography. Its critical function is to emancipate social science from its bounded national presuppositions and construct new analytical concepts appropriate to globalising times. My question is whether the new cosmopolitanism is as new or as cosmopolitan as it suggests. To explore this
issue further, I am now going to narrow my focus and concentrate for a moment on the work of one sociologist who has arguably done more than any other to construct the new cosmopolitanism over the last decade: Ulrich Beck

**Ulrich Beck and the critique of methodological nationalism**

In a path-breaking series of essays and books spanning the last decade (1998a, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2002a; 2003; 2006) Beck has campaigned persistently and urgently for the overcoming of the tradition of ‘methodological nationalism’ within sociology and for the development of a ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ in its place. I want to address here one aspect of his multi-faceted work: the time-consciousness, that is, the conception of past, present and future, which informs his cosmopolitan vision. The rigidities of how he conceives the relation between past and future may serve as an exemplar of a wider problem within the new cosmopolitanism – and one that worries the more astute observers (Chernilo 2007; 2007a; 2008).

Beck argues that traditional sociology has equated the idea of ‘society’ with the nation-state and that it has simply assumed that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations: ‘It is a nation-state outlook’, Beck writes, ‘that governs the sociological imagination’ (Beck 2002b: 51-2). He maintains that the solidity and self-sufficiency of the nation state are now being shattered and that this social transformation places upon sociology the responsibility to re-invent itself as ‘a transnational science… released from the fetters of methodological nationalism’ (Beck 2002a: 53-4). He writes of the ‘obsolescence’ of traditional social theories and their ‘zombie categories’ and looks to the emancipation of social theory from the old ‘container theory of society’. Beck sees the canon and tradition of social theory dominated by the conceptualisations of methodological nationalism: ‘The possibility
that the unity of state and nation might dissolve, disintegrate or undergo a complete
transformation remains beyond the purview of the social sciences’ (Beck 2006: 29).
He stands for the replacement of the old ‘methodological nationalism’ which used to
dominate the social sciences with a new ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ that is
capable of tackling ‘what had previously been analytically excluded’ (Beck 2002a: 52). Beck concedes we can find partial arguments in the history of sociology that
point beyond methodological nationalism, but is insistent that there has been no
serious questioning within sociology of the unity of state and nation until the
emergence of the new cosmopolitanism itself.

The critique of ‘methodological nationalism’ actually goes back to the 1970s when a
number of sociologists, including Anthony Giddens (1973) and Herminio Martins
(1974), argued that a major defect of existing social science was the treatment of
nation-states as if they were closed, autonomous and self-contained units. Their
contention was that the limited vision of methodological nationalism led to
predominantly endogenous explanations of social change and that this explanatory
bias had to be rectified (Smelser 1997; Wagner 1994). Beck radicalised this critique
of prevailing sociological theories of social change and turned it into a far more
general dissatisfaction with the sociological tradition (Chernilo 2006, 2006a, 2007a).
He presents the critique of methodological nationalism not so much as a contribution
within the tradition of social theory but as a major rupture in the history of social
theory – one made necessary by the era of radical epochal change in which we now
live.

Now, a sense of rupture and epochal change is widely shared within social theory. It
is evident, for instance, in the classification of modernity into ‘periods’: modernity
and postmodernity, high modernity and late modernity, first modernity and second modernity, solid modernity and liquid modernity, national modernity and postnational modernity. It is a vital part of social theory to identify what is new in social and political life and to think about this entails for social and political thought. We cannot assume that old concepts suffice to convey new phenomena. For example, it can be positively misleading to assume that concepts of power drawn from a pre-totalitarian age will be sufficient to understand the genuinely unprecedented forms of terror and annihilation brought into existence by totalitarian movements. We must always question whether the words we use have caught up with our experiences.

However, the sense of epochal change that plays so large a role in social theory can itself be misleading if it simply makes a cult out of novelty. We live in an age in which ‘the new’ is proclaimed from every advertising banner and contemporary social theory is itself a creature of our age. It too is inclined to speak freely of new forms of democracy, new forms of war, new types of personal relationship and so forth. It does so often on the basis of homogenised views of the past and without consideration of the multiple ways in which the past weighs upon the present. We cannot simply set aside concepts, like old hats we remove from our head, without considering whence they came and what work they do (Young-Bruehl 2006). New concepts have to be squared with new realities or they too can become a constraint on our thinking. Today there is nothing new in declaring the new and the claim that this or that event is ‘unprecedented’, and that there are no words to describe it, has itself become almost a commonplace of philosophical discourse (Derrida 2003).

The cult of the new, if we may call it thus, can be illustrated through Beck’s analysis of the destruction of the World Trade Centre. 9/11, he writes, stands for the ‘complete
collapse of language’. It signals the bankruptcy of all national frames of reference. It indicates the ‘global community of fate’ to which we are all now bound. It demonstrates that in a world risk society we need a ‘new big idea’, that of cosmopolitanism itself (Beck 2002: 48). Beck likens the advent of cosmopolitan norms in our own times to the sea-change achieved by the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century. He declares that it marks the advent of a ‘second Enlightenment’ – one that will ‘open our eyes and our institutions to the immaturity of the first industrial civilization and the dangers it posed to itself’ (Beck 2002a: 50). He argues that 9/11 confronts the world with an existential choice: not only between nationalism and multilateralism but also between regressive multilateralism based on surveillance states and progressive multilateralism based on cosmopolitan states. A multilateralism based on surveillance states sacrifices rights, law, democracy and hospitality to the security of the Western citadel. A multilateralism based on cosmopolitan principles also seeks security but by means of human rights, international law, democracy and hospitality at the transnational level. 9/11, he writes, brings to the surface the defining characteristic of our age – that risks are spatially de-territorialised and uncontrollable at the level of the nation-state and that it is necessary to construct a new principle of cosmopolitan order transcending both the classical framework of nation states and the imposition of police powers at the international level.

Over against the cult of the new, I do not wish to suggest that there is nothing new in the kind of terrorism practiced in 9/11. On the contrary, it seems to me that recent attempts to analagise this event to the old totalitarianism of Stalin and Hitler or to the old uses of terror in national liberation movements are equally inadequate ways of dealing with what is new in this case. But to speak of a ‘complete collapse of language’ can only diminish our ability to understand the event. No understanding is
possible without analytical concepts against which to measure what is new. While all social theory tries to make sense of a rapidly transforming world, the idea of crisis only makes sense against a backdrop which allows us to see what has changed (Habermas 1969).

The critique of the critique of methodological nationalism

The other side of the coin of being stuck in old ways of thinking is what Frank Webster has termed the ‘fallacy of presentism’ (Webster 2002: 267). The fallacy of presentism refers to the tendency to turn the present into an ‘ism’ and prematurely declare the redundancy of old concepts and theories. The paradox of ‘presentism’ may be illustrated by the observation that while Beck argues in relation to 9/11 for the need for new categories of understanding and new standards of judgment to deal with this event, he declares his own debt to the 17th century political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and poses his analysis of global risk society in essentially Hobbesian terms (Beck 2002: 46). It concerns the nature of the risks that arise in global society and the political conditions of achieving security in these circumstances.

Beck’s representation of the history of the nation state strangely mirrors the ‘methodological nationalism’ he criticises. He argues that ‘national organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as a premise for the social science observer perspective’ (Beck 2002b: 51-2, my italics), implying that in the past this national principle may well have been an appropriate premise. According to this account methodological nationalism was right for its own times, though obsolete for ours, and Beck criticises it only from a historical point of view (Joas 2003). The fairly obvious point to make is that a methodologically nationalist social science has never been able to provide a satisfactory account of nation-states
even during the ‘first age of modernity’ (Chernilo 2006). If this is so, then Beck is not to be faulted for criticising methodological nationalism but rather for accepting too readily its historical validity. ‘Methodological nationalism’ is an approach that naturalises or rationalises the existence of the nation state. It locates the development of the nation state in a teleological framework as the apex of modern political community. It imposes the concept of the nation state upon all political formations which have emerged or survived in the modern period, including multi-national empires, totalitarian regimes, east and west power blocs, city states and transnational bodies like the European Union. It treats the nation state as the characteristic form of political community of the modern age, or in the first modernity, and presumes its solidity, centrality and increasing pervasiveness. The problem with the critique of methodological nationalism, as Beck formulates it, is that it accepts the premises of methodological nationalism and differs only in declaring the advent of a new epoch, a second modernity, in which the national principle of political organisation finally gives way to the cosmopolitan.

Analogous issues arise in the field of international relations, where Beck writes of the changing grammar of the term ‘international’ and the hollowing of the ‘fetish concepts’ of state and nation (Beck 2006: 37). He represents the ‘Westphalian’ order of independent nation states as the framework of international relations in the ‘first modernity’ and characterises it as a Hobbesian state of nature writ large, a perpetual war of all states against all in which no state could be secure. However, he also represents this anarchic model as remarkably stable – enduring for over three hundred years from the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 right up to our own times. He acknowledges that the Westphalian order has assumed different shapes and forms in the course of its progressive evolution but his basic contention is that no fundamental
change to the system of nation states occurred before the transition to the new cosmopolitan epoch. Events as momentous as eighteenth century political revolutions, the growth of imperialism in the nineteenth century, the collapse of mainland empires after the First World War, the formation of a raft of newly independent nation-states out of their fragments, the rise of totalitarian regimes with anti-national and global ambitions in the inter-war period, the collapse of overseas empires after the Second World War, a further raft of newly independent ex-colonial states, and the formation of two ‘camps’ during the Cold War – all such events are presented as punctuation marks in a continuous and expanding Westphalian narrative. Even the forms of international co-operation established among nation-states, such as the formation of the United Nations, and the emergence of a world system of independent nation states appear merely to consolidate the fundamental principle of national sovereignty (Giddens 1985).

In this representation of history all events prior to the rise of the new cosmopolitan order seem only to consolidate and generalise the ‘old’ order of independent nation states, as if the hoary chestnut, le plus ça change, le plus c’est la même chose, held absolute sway in the sphere of life. The ‘new’ cosmopolitan order appears as a product of our own age and not least of the work of the new cosmopolitans themselves. This teleological reconstruction of the history of the nation state in the past allows for a spectacular image of the radical disjuncture occurring in the present. And yet the dependence of methodological cosmopolitanism on the methodological nationalism it seeks to overcome becomes all the more pronounced. Both conceive of a rupture between tradition and modernity in the mid-17th century marked by the Treaty of Westphalia. Both conceive of the nation state as the governing principle of modern political community. Methodological cosmopolitanism differs from
methodological nationalism only in that it refuses to see the nation state as an end of history and proposes a second rupture, one which brings into being the cosmopolitan condition (Wagner 2001: 83). ¹

I am arguing that Beck concedes too much to methodological nationalism when he intimates that it did once have a historical validity. I would also suggest that the critique of methodological nationalism has in fact been a fairly constant feature of social theory, even if it is executed in uneven and inconsistent ways (Turner 2006; Chernilo 2007 and 2007a). For example, Emile Durkheim’s appeal to the cosmopolitan moral foundations of the modern state was more explicit than most. He looked to the reconciliation of cosmopolitanism and patriotism by shifting the priorities of national rivalry from war to peaceable competition. He wrote:

> If each State had as its chief aim not to expand or to lengthen its borders, but to set its own house in order and to make the widest appeal to its members for a moral life on an ever higher level, then all discrepancy between national and human morals would be excluded…. The more societies concentrate their energies inwards, on the interior life, the more they will be diverted from the disputes that bring a clash between cosmopolitanism —or world patriotism, and patriotism… Societies can have their pride, not in being the greatest or the wealthiest, but in being the most just, the best organised and in possessing the best moral constitution (Durkheim 1992: 74-5) ²

In the case of Marx, we find not only a normative commitment to ‘internationalism’ rather than nationalism but more significantly an analysis of the erosion of national boundaries by global capitalism and a critique of the dynamics of capital accumulation in which national characteristics play a strictly subordinate part. Weber
for his part objected to any treatment of nations as ‘individuals’ or ‘biological entities’, indeed to any hypostatisation of the nation as a ‘social-psychological unity which experiences development in itself’, and he rejected attempts to understand social life through notions of ‘common blood’, ‘shared culture’ or ‘Volkgeist’ (Chernilo 2007a: 29-30). It is interesting to note that contemporary German critics of his *Science as a Vocation* (1919) objected to the non-nationalistic worldview and ‘un-German’ universalism that ran through the text (Schluchter 1996: 39-45). Similarly Simmel advanced a universal conception of society as a sphere of ‘reciprocal influencing’ and warned against any treatment of society as a ‘collective name’. The universalism of sociological conceptions of society is a question that deserves a book on its own (Chernilo 2007).

I do not suggest that these critiques of methodological nationalism were successful. For instance, Durkheim’s fusion of *la patrie* and cosmopolitanism proved no obstacle to the expression of vehemently anti-German sentiments during the First World War, based on a critique of the militaristic and anti-Semitic nationalism of one German, Heinrich von Treitschke. I suggest only that the approach of Sociology to the science of the social contains within it an opposition to methodological nationalism. Classical sociology saw itself not as a repudiation of enlightenment universalism but as its empirical manifestation (Wagner 2006). The key point, however, is certainly not to defend the sociological tradition *tout court* against the charge of methodological nationalism but to consider why this charge has been so stressed and over-extended within the new cosmopolitanism.³ For in both ‘old’ social theory and the ‘new’ cosmopolitanism we are confronted with the difficult question of the positioning of the nation state in the context of the global reshaping of modernity.
The temporal frame of Beck’s critique of methodological nationalism lends itself to a particularly negative view of the sociological tradition. He presents ‘humanistic universalism’ as the key characteristic of Enlightenment thought and describes it as a universalism that tends toward greater sameness and the elimination of plurality.

Universalism obliges us to respect others as equals in principle, yet for that very reason does not involve any requirement that would inspire curiosity or respect for what makes other different… the particularity of others is sacrificed to an assumed universal equality which denies its own origins and interests. Universalism becomes thereby two-faced: respect and hegemony, rationality and terror.

Beck argues that the humanistic universalism of enlightenment thought gave way to the methodological nationalism of social theory, which elevated its national conception of society over and above any universal conception of humanity. He finally presents cosmopolitanism as the reconciliation of enlightenment universalism and methodological nationalism: on the one hand, it presupposes a ‘universalistic minimum’ to be upheld at all costs and ‘universal procedural norms’ to regulate the cross-cultural treatment of difference; on the other, it ‘does not negate nationalism but presupposes it and transforms it into cosmopolitan nationalism’ (Beck 2006: 49). The cosmopolitan vision, according to Beck, permits people to ‘view themselves simultaneously as part of a threatened world and as part of their local situation and histories’. It indicates the ‘recognition of difference beyond the misunderstandings of territoriality and homogenisation’ (Beck 2006: 30). It replaces the ‘either-or’ mentality of the past, be it the humanistic universalism of the Enlightenment or the methodological nationalism of social theory, with the ‘both-and’ consciousness of the
evolving cosmopolitan future. An alternative way of putting this might be that the new cosmopolitanism presents itself as the synthesis of an old-fashioned modernist humanism on the one side and postmodern identity politics on the other. 4

Beck wishes to construct cosmopolitanism in a way that is incompatible with all homogenising claims. His aim is not to advance cosmopolitanism as an abstraction ruling over the plurality of particular national needs and interests nor as a power to which nations must bow as if to their own rational will, but as the rational form in which the universal and the particular are finally reconciled. This kind of synthesis sometimes goes under the name of ‘post-universalism’. I would argue, however, that it is not as radical or new as it seems and that its equivocations go to the heart of political modernity (Löwith 1967).

Post-universalism and the modern state

The name ‘cosmopolitanism’ goes back to antiquity and its ancient connotations still have resonance among modern writers (Cohen and Fine 2003). Martha Nussbaum defines the cosmopolitan as one whose politics is ‘based upon reason rather than patriotism or group sentiment’ and is ‘truly universal rather than communitarian’ (Nussbaum 1997). Nussbaum looks to antiquity not only as the origin but as the inspiration of cosmopolitanism. She looks back to Zeno’s ‘cosmopolis’ – a world-city based on a common law for all humanity in which even barbarians and slaves could be citizens; to Diogenes’s dissenting claim to be a ‘citizen of the world’, a claim denounced by Plutarch as absurd as well as dangerous; to Cicero’s faith in a ‘society of humanity’ and the ‘common right of humanity’; and to Seneca’s maxim that ‘we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun’. While the ancient cosmopolitan tradition was not ‘innocent’, based either on the
elevation of the Greek *polis* as a model for the world or on the ambition of the Roman Empire to turn the world into a common people under its own rule (Pagden 2000), it still embodied an emphatic idea of universality and an equally emphatic repudiation of patriotism and other group loyalties.

What makes modern cosmopolitanism *modern*, however, is not so much that it stands for a universal human community over and above local loyalties, but rather that it seeks to *reconcile* the idea of universal species-wide human solidarity with particular solidarities that are smaller and more specific than the human species (Hollinger 2001: 238). This reconciliation takes many forms. For example, John Stuart Mill insisted that the principle of *patriotisme éclairé* he proposed, which he distinguished from ‘nationality in the vulgar sense of the term; a senseless antipathy to foreigners’, was compatible with ‘the general welfare of the human race’ and he wrote of the capacity of human beings, properly educated, to attain an ‘ideal devotion’ not only to their own country but to ‘a greater country, the world’:

> When we consider how ardent a sentiment, in favourable circumstances, of education, *the love of country* has become, we cannot judge it impossible that *the love of that larger country, the world,* may be nursed into similar strength’  

We have already noted that Emile Durkheim looked to the reconciliation of cosmopolitanism and patriotism through shifting the priorities of national rivalry from war to peaceable competition.

The ‘new cosmopolitanism’ follows closely in these ‘modernist’ footsteps. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1996) appeals to the concept of ‘cosmopolitan patriotism’ to convey the idea that a sense of belonging to a particular community is a necessary aspect of
turning cosmopolitanism into a desirable and realisable political project. Jürgen Habermas looks to the reconciliation of cosmopolitan values, laws and institutions with the re-affirmation of national and transnational identity in the form of ‘constitutional patriotism’ (2001: 74-6). Will Kymlicka (1995) warns of the danger of constitutional patriotism being used by existing nation-states to crush minority rights and seeks to construct a cosmopolitanism that will also protect national minorities. Ulrich Beck, as we have seen, argues that cosmopolitanism, far from negating nationalism, ‘presupposes it and transforms it into cosmopolitan nationalism’ (Beck 2006: 49). The concept of ‘cosmopolitan nationalism’ may sound rather like kosher bacon but Beck is not alone in insisting that the stabilising and integrative factors enlightened patriotism provides are required by cosmopolitanism. In short, the new cosmopolitanism draws its appeal from the contrast between ancient and modern conceptions of political community: the former aspiring for a universal in which the rights of particular solidarities remain downplayed or invalidated; the latter aspiring for a universalistic world compatible with the rights of particular solidarities (Hollinger 2001).  

The strength of the ancient conception of cosmopolitanism lies in its critical purchase: it offers a clear-cut critique of nationalism, patriotism and other ‘local’ manifestations of political modernity. The strength of the modern conception of cosmopolitanism lies in its embrace of the core principle of political modernity, the integration of particular rights of subjective freedom with the common good. The question arises, however, in my mind at least as to the critical purchase of the modern conception: how far does it offer a critique of political modernity or an adaptation to it. The new cosmopolitanism can sometimes appear as immensely radical and transformative and at other times as little more than a gloss on the existing political order.
When the new cosmopolitanism appeals to ‘post-universalism’, to what Beck terms a ‘both-and’ rather than an ‘either-or’ consciousness, this appeal forgets that the awesome power of the modern state derives from its already being ‘both-and’ from the start. Let me cite Hegel in support of this claim. In his own peculiar style he writes in *The Philosophy of Right*:

> The principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfilment in the *self-sufficient extreme* of personal particularity, while at the same time *bringing it back to substantial unity* and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself. The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity and the well-being of individuals… the universality of the end cannot make further progress without the personal knowledge and volition of particular individuals who must retain their rights… the universal must be activated, but subjectivity on the other hand must be developed as a living whole. Only when both moments are present in full measure can the state be regarded as articulated and truly organised.

The principle of the modern state is that it represents both the public interest and the particular interests of individuals within it. What makes the modern state modern is that it allows the principle of individuality to attain complete fulfilment whilst at the same time bringing it back to the unity of the whole. This is the principle but of ‘both-and’. Hegel argues that the conjunction of the universal and the particular not only gives to the modern state a self-consciously liberal aspect, as the locus of reconciliation between the public interest and private rights, but also feeds the megalomania of the modern state since what the state is and does appears as the
rational will of every individual within it. It evaporates the real antagonisms between the individual and the state. It mystifies their relation. The ‘both-and’ quality of the modern state is an integral part of its power. By treating its own will as the will of every individual, it feeds its most dangerous totalitarian fantasies.

In identifying cosmopolitanism with the both-and consciousness of post-universalism, the new cosmopolitanism does not so much engage with the critique of the modern state, the fetishism of its power, as transfer the logic of reconciliation to a higher level.

**The cosmopolitan vision**

The cosmopolitan vision, as Beck advances it, is more about the future than the past. It is predominantly not about what the world of nation states was like but what the world is becoming and how our consciousness is changing with it. For Beck, orientation to the future sometimes appears as a cosmopolitan principle. He writes that in world risk society ‘the past loses its power to determine the present. Instead, the future – something non-existent, constructed or fictitious – takes its place as the cause of present experience and action’ (Beck 2000a: 100). He contrasts the ‘future-oriented legitimacy’ and ‘visionary non-fiction’ of cosmopolitan sociology with both the ‘more-of-the-same dogma’ of traditional sociology and teleological conceptions of historical progress, and hopes in this manner to comprehend a situation that is ‘still to manifest its full development’ (Beck 2000b: 8-9).

Beck insists there is a sense in which ‘reality itself has become cosmopolitan’ and refers to the emergence of what he calls, enticingly, a ‘banal, everyday and forced cosmopolitanism’ (Beck 2006). The question is this: even if we are prepared to concede that cosmopolitanism is not only ‘forced’ but also contains its own
propensities to the use of force, in what sense can we say that ‘reality itself has become cosmopolitan’? On closer inspection the justification of this claim rests more on the development of a certain kind of consciousness than on any social transformation. For example, Beck refers to mass migration and the resulting growth of heterogeneous and hybrid populations in most modern societies in support of the proposition that reality has become cosmopolitan. He immediately concedes, however, there is nothing new in this phenomenon and that what has changed is the emergence of a new kind of political and cultural awareness which affirms the mixing of peoples. He writes: ‘From the very beginning the emerging global market required the mixing of peoples… What is new is not forced mixing but awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation’ (Beck 2006: 21). However, the self-conscious political affirmation of the mixing of peoples is unfortunately highly contested in the present day and co-exists with all manner of rival and reactive nationalisms. Similarly when Beck refers to the explosion of global risks, he argues these risks cannot be addressed by nation-states acting alone and create ‘inescapable’ pressures for states to co-operate across national boundaries. However, there is nothing new in the need for states to co-operate with other states and today, in the face of ecological and terrorist crises, the pressures on states to cooperate are proving anything but inescapable. As Beck well knows, there are many who argue that the West is divided over the question of whether to affirm co-operation through international law or to take the road of hegemonic unilateralism and that ecological crises are as likely to lead to new conflicts as to new forms of co-operation.

Is there a sense nonetheless in which we can say with Beck that ‘reality has become cosmopolitan’? I think a reference to Kantian natural law theory might help illuminate Beck’s proposition. When Kant referred to his own times as an ‘age of
enlightenment’, he did not mean to say that his age was enlightened but that enlightenment was ethically the most defensible philosophical project of his age. In *What is Enlightenment?* he formulated the issue thus:

If it is now asked whether we at present live in an *enlightened* age, the answer is no, but we do live in an age of enlightenment. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go… But we do have distinct indications that the way is now being cleared for them to work freely in this direction… Men will of their own accord gradually work their way out of barbarism so long as artificial measures are not deliberately adopted to keep them in it (Kant 1991: 58)

If it is now asked *What is Cosmopolitanism?* the equivalent answer might run along these lines. We do not live in a cosmopolitan age but we do live in an age of cosmopolitanism. As things are, we have a long way to go but we do have distinct indications that the way is being cleared for a cosmopolitan future so long as artificial measures are not deliberately adopted to prevent it. The age of cosmopolitanism may be understood more as a normative perspective for viewing the potentialities and necessities of our age than as an objective characterisation of the age itself. The cosmopolitan vision may be understood in this context as spelling out the rational direction humankind would take so long as artificial measures are not adopted to prevent this outcome. If the devil lies in the detail of this qualification, it also reveals the natural law framework in which the new cosmopolitanism continues to be posed.

**Cosmopolitanism and criticism**

The new cosmopolitanism meets with criticism from many sides and my interest here is not to add to the list. On a factual level, critics allude to the short-term or downright
illusory character of cosmopolitan reforms: just as previous cosmopolitan initiatives were extinguished under the pressure of power politics, so too the cosmopolitan precedents established since 1989 may prove equally provisional (Zolo 1997 and 1999). Alternatively, critics accept that the order of sovereign nation states is being surpassed but provide a far more pessimistic reading of the post-national constellation that is replacing it. What is presented in the guise of cosmopolitanism may be revealed as the dominance of global capital over the life-world or of America over the globe. In this case cosmopolitanism is not criticised for the claim that the democratic structures and political life of the nation state are becoming obsolete, but for its failure to see that this social transformation only intensifies the abstract character of domination. Hardt and Negri, for example, discern in the present the transformation of rival nations into a singular, overwhelming Empire, though they construct a kind of ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ in which an unbounded and nationally indistinct multitude is metamorphosed into the permanently resistant subject of global revolt (Hardt and Negri 2000).

Criticism is made of the cultural assumptions, national prejudices and power positions that remain intact behind the apparently universalistic discourse of the new cosmopolitanism, which leads critics to construe it as a mask for the imposition of ‘Western’ values on the ‘East’ and ‘South’, or as an instrument serving the political and financial interests of the sole remaining super-power. Critics argue that the cosmopolitan propensity to devalue state sovereignty coincides with the interests of American expansionism and is invoked only when American interests are at stake. Cosmopolitanism is charged with perpetuating the myth that the current global order is ruled by universal ideals and a supranational body authorised to enforce these ideals, whereas it is actually ruled by a hierarchy of co-operating and competing
nation states – different from the Westphalian order only in the fact that never before has one nation dominated others as the USA has done since 1989 (Chomsky 1999; Douzinas 2000). Some ‘Schmittian’ critics object to cosmopolitanism not only on the grounds that it expresses the hypocrisy of great powers but is used by great powers to moralise war and demonise their enemies (Agamben 2005).

Such criticisms are deeply destructive of the cosmopolitan enterprise and it is not difficult to discern the flaws in actually existing cosmopolitanism which its critics are quick to exploit. It can be usurped by power. It can display the vanity of thinking it has discovered a new ‘Truth’ on which the future of the globe depends and the innocence of thinking that the past no longer bears down on the present. It can perpetuate the myth of novelty and show contempt for ways of thinking it declares obsolete. It can assume the world has to be invented anew and it can be over-confident in its own prescriptions. If a distinguishing mark of nationalism is to get its own history wrong (Hobsbawm 1994), the same may be said of the new cosmopolitanism: it can paint the past grey on grey the better to declare its own futuristic brilliance. If such defects do exist, this is no reason to abandon cosmopolitanism, only to reflect on its own shortcomings and to remedy them.

Criticism can fall short of what it criticises. Hegel once wrote that ‘hatred of right is the shibboleth whereby fanaticism, imbecility and hypocritical good intentions manifestly … reveal themselves’ (Hegel 1991§258fn). I think this is true of hatred of the idea of cosmopolitan right. Even if cosmopolitanism becomes stuck at the level of conceptual thinking, it remains superior to a criticism that has no understanding of the concept and sees in world history nothing but power, self-interest and contingency. The ignominious history of twentieth century hatred toward cosmopolitanism may be
illustrated through the stigmatisation of the ‘rootless cosmopolitan Jew’. Eleonore Koffman tells the story of how cultural conservatives (such as Carlyle, Spengler and Sombart) complained of the impure culture of ‘cosmopolitan cities’, notably Vienna, into which Jewish emancipation in the 19th century had brought an influx of Jewish immigrants. Jews were represented as a corrupting element, foreign to the nation, rootless and without homeland, the personification of the cosmopolitan (Koffman 2006 and Traverso 1997). This way of thinking was inherited by a Stalinist political culture which abhorred uprootedness and treated cosmopolitanism as synonymous with betrayal of the motherland (Buck-Morss 2002). Mass arrests of Jewish intellectuals and repression of Jewish culture after the Second World War were perpetrated under the banner of campaigns against ‘rootless cosmopolitans’ as well as against ‘Zionists’. Such stigmatisation of cosmopolitanism indicates to me only that there is something very valuable to preserve.

1 The underlying logic has some resemblance, though surely not in accord with Beck’s own wishes, to a vulgar dialectic in which the ‘thesis’ appears as the traditional unity of morality and politics prior to the Treaty of Westphalia, the ‘antithesis’ is the modern diremption of morality and politics after the Treaty of Westphalia, and the ‘synthesis’ is the reunification of morality and politics under a cosmopolitan register. This formulaic philosophy of history renders invisible the troubled history of nation states throughout the modern age and the equally troubled history of social scientific attempts to understand and intervene in this history.

2 Durkheim was not alone in seeing the Great War as a clash of civilisations and a contest of rival ‘national’ values and virtues. Exchanges of fire on the battlefields took
place alongside a war of ideas in which the big intellectual and spiritual cannons blazed with accusations, denials and counter-accusations. French intellectuals of all backgrounds and persuasions were united in the belief that the war was between civilisation and barbarism, a view confirmed by the catalogue of German atrocities and oppressions on and off the battlefield, and that France had a universal mission on behalf of humankind. Durkheim certainly had an appropriate target in Treitschke who had this to say about Jews: ‘The Jews at one time played a necessary role in German history, because of their ability in the management of money. But now that the Aryans have become accustomed to the idiosyncrasies of finance, the Jews are no longer necessary. The international Jew… is a disintegrating influence; he can be of no further use to the world. It is necessary to speak openly about the Jews, undisturbed by the fact that the Jewish press befouls what is purely historical truth’ (*History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*).

3 Beck criticises the sociological tradition for falsely universalising particular national experiences. He put the matter thus: ‘There is an inner affinity between the national and universal perspectives. One’s own society serves as the model for society in general, from which it follows that the basic characteristics of universal society can be derived from an analysis of this society’ (Beck 2006: 28). This may be a recognisable trait of sociology but so too is understanding other cultures and paying careful attention to their own truth claims and value judgments (Taylor 1994).
Again there is a certain resemblance between the logic of Beck’s argument and a philosophy of history in which the ‘thesis’ is humanistic universalism, the ‘antithesis’ is methodological nationalism and the ‘synthesis’ is cosmopolitanism.

The new cosmopolitanism has an equivocal relation to the two cornerstones of the self-understanding of modern societies, nationalism and socialism (Fine and Chernilo 2003). The core deficiency it sees in these great intellectual and political movements of the modern age is that they prioritise the particular interests and values of a nation or class over the universal interests of humanity or identify these particular interests and values with those of humanity as a whole. The shibboleth it seeks to overcome is the idea of a ‘universal’ class or nation whose particular values and interests are identified with the general interests of humanity as a whole. The new cosmopolitanism also parts company with the practice, if not idea, of internationalism, seeing in it an ideology deployed by national elites to justify the universality of their own particular interests. At one time, to be a good internationalist one had only to support the Soviet Union through all its twists and turns of its foreign policy (Hobsbawm 1994; Rodinson 1972; Fine 1990). Against these competing forms of particularism and the spurious universals they generate, the new cosmopolitanism presents itself as a collective endeavour to reconstruct a genuine universalistic outlook and overcome the narrow particularism and merely abstract universalism constitutive of the modern political imagination. It wishes to build a radically different vision: one which no longer looks to a particular class or nation as the embodiment of universal values, still less to the destruction of another class or nation as the condition of human emancipation, but to the construction of a complex, differentiated, lawful and institutionalised universalism different from all these spurious forms of reconciliation.
The tension between liberalism and the megalomania of the state is already immanent within Hobbes’s conception of the Leviathan. In the state of nature people are driven by ‘fear of death’ and ‘desire for security’ into ‘seeking peace’. Reason demands a renunciation of their natural liberty and the erection of a ‘common power’, a ‘mortal God’, to compel the performance of promises and obedience to laws. This common power reduces the plurality of voices into one will, so that everyone must ‘own and acknowledge himself to be the author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person, shall act or cause to be acted in those things which concern the common peace and safety’ (Hobbes 2000: 122). The sovereign ‘can do no injury to any of his subjects nor ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice’ (Hobbes 2000: 124).